



What do you do when it seems like your life has been “locked down”? What’s still true when life comes to a standstill? Paul should know, since he spent a lot of time unable to go where he wanted. Still, he was able to thrive in his faith and his ministry. In this series we will examine his prison epistles to unlock truths that remind us that no matter what the believer is going through, there is still life!

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 Rick began by reminding us that one thing the pandemic has taught us is that “*love is essential.*” Even when so much has been lost, diminished, or locked down, followers of Jesus know that **love is still powerful!** How have you experienced that to be true in your life recently?

2 Read **Colossians 4:7-9** and **Philemon 1-3** to get the context for Philemon. What stands out to you about Paul’s relationship with Onesimus (a runaway slave of Philemon who was a leader in the church in Colosse) and his relationship to Philemon?

3 **IN ANY SITUATION... Christians still love.** *This story reminds us that we should never stop praying for runaways, asking God to find them and send them to a safe place where they can find Jesus.* Read **Philemon 4-21**. What does it appear Paul wanted Philemon to do, based on these verses? Why do you think Paul appealed to Philemon on Onesimus’ behalf? What was the basis of Paul’s appeal to Philemon?

4 How is slavery in the NT different than the type of slavery practiced in our nation’s past (and at the same time still a serious problem)? With that in mind, how is what Paul is doing in this short letter “*a revolutionary ask*”? Follow up: what impact should that have on all of our relationships today (see **Matthew 5:23-24**)?

5 **WE CAN... still decide to love.** *Being in Christ changes the way we see all people—no longer in the way that determines their status in the world.* Share some examples of how you’ve seen this played out in our world. Follow up: In what ways does being in Christ change the way we see **all** people or put another way what does seeing people through the lens of the gospel help us realize about **all** people?

6 **WE CAN... still provide for love.** *Love is most powerful when its cost gets real personal.* Read **Philemon 15-19**. How does this section illustrate the gospel of grace? What is so significant about Paul’s willingness to take on the debt of Onesimus so that he could find freedom? Follow up: What implications does Paul’s example have on “*a complicated relational mess*” in your own life right now?

7 Rick closed by reminding us that “*In any situation Christians still love, and in every situation love still works. This is the way of the kingdom.*” How is choosing “*the way of the cross*” and remembering “*that sacrifice is mightier than self-interest, and that love is greater than hate*” radically different from the ways our world normally operates? Follow up: Is there someone in your life right now God is calling you to radically love? What next step do you need to take to build a bridge in that relationship?

